

Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation

Uniting Care NSW ACT

BASF Newsletters

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BASF NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2005

We are currently assisting 100 refugees and asylum seekers, of whom 70 are adults and the rest are children and youths. Without our help, life would be very difficult for those asylum seekers and refugees living in the community. They are on bridging visas that do not allow them to study, or even do voluntary work. They are denied access to any government benefits, such as social security, public education or Medicare.

Thanks to all our contributors who through donations and support for our fund raising events have made it possible for us to support the 100 asylum seekers. BASF has been assisted through the generosity of many people, including several individuals and a number of Foundations who have provided donations of \$1,000 or more. Also, in the last 3 months, we were very fortunate to be provided with the opportunity of raising funds at a number of venues.

There is considerable concern that the grants being given to our recipients are not enough to cover basic needs. Some activities are being undertaken to try to increase our income and applications have been lodged through local government committees to obtain additional funds

Our list of recipients covers a wide group of asylum seekers from North Africa, the Middle East, Aceh, the Indian sub-continent, Asia, South America, and Afghanistan; some are stateless. Some live with guarantors, friends or in housing provided by church groups.

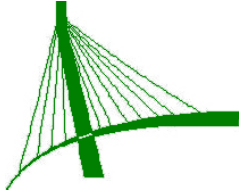
The Committee of the Foundation has been very busy since our newsletter in March. We have had many more requests for assistance. Unfortunately, some of the requests come from people who are outside our guidelines. The process for vetting applicants for assistance is contained in guidelines which were agreed to by the BASF Committee at its inception. This is to ensure that only those who have a reasonable chance of proving asylum seeker status receive grants. Cash grants of \$60 per week are given to individuals with grants in excess of \$100 going to families. We can only assist those applicants who would suffer torture, persecution or death if they were returned to their country of birth or place of residence. We are extremely grateful to the legal and migration experts who evaluate the cases for us at no cost to the Foundation.

Activities since 31 March include:

Asylum Seeker Project: The part-time worker, Ms Kate Maclurcan, who has wide fundraising experience and a broad knowledge and experience in the asylum seeker and refugee field, has been assisting with applications for funds to Councils and local government committees. She is also speaking at various venues on our behalf – at these she is able to collect donations for us.

Birchgrove Park Concert: Leichhardt Council sponsored a free concert at Birchgrove Park from 12 noon to 10.00 pm. Local bands and other well-known acts performed. There was fun for everyone. Leichhardt Council granted the BASF permission to collect funds throughout the day and in excess of \$4000 was raised.

Gardens without Borders: This is the second year that BASF held its main fundraiser: "Gardens without Borders in Mt Wilson 2005" on the Mother's Day weekend - 7th and 8th May. Gardens on display this year were Bisley, Hawthorn, Merry Garth, Sefton Cottage and Withycombe. In spite of rain for most of the Saturday and a misty Sunday morning takings



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were only slightly less than in 2004. For this project BASF is the sponsor with members of other refugee groups providing the muscle for staffing the gates and food stalls, and providing much of the equipment and the setting up and closing down. Gross proceeds were in excess of \$20,000 of which BASF received approximately \$9,000.

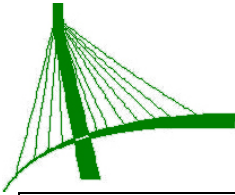
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Bushwahzee Concert - Sunday 22 May 2005 at the Circle Café – 344 Darling Street, Balmain: Melbourne band, Bushwahzee – stalwarts of the Port Fairy Folk Festival - delighted the audience with their wide repertoire from Irish fiddle tunes, jigs and reels to gentle folk songs, bush yarns and hits from the sixties. This was an informal afternoon of wonderful music, delicious food and wine and the best coffee in Balmain in this leafy café. Circle Café (Balmain Uniting Church in its other life). The function raised more than \$2000.

The work of BASF continues and although we would be very glad to see all asylum seekers released into the community it will mean a greater strain on our resources to meet the urgent needs of new applicants should they be released on Bridging Visa Es..

We continue to be given support by the Board members and staff of UnitingCare NSW ACT, without this support it would make our task of providing a service to asylum seekers and refugees much harder.



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I would like to help the Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation provide direct support for Visa "E" and special category refugees and lobby for their better treatment. Please send me:

- () more information about Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation
- () information about direct bank or credit card debits for regular donations

I enclose a cheque/money order/credit details for a donation of \$ _____

Name _____ Phone: _____

Address _____

Email address _____

Credit card: Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard Expiry Date ____/____

Card No _____

Signature _____

Donations of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible

Unfortunately, some of the e-mail addresses collected at functions have "bounced back" so it is not been possible to contact some supporters this way. If you have e-mail address and would like to receive our newsletter by e-mail, please advise us at the e-mail address above.